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PRESS RELEASE – For Immediate Release

Health Officials Urge Residents to Prepare for Cold Temperatures with a Flu Shot

SOUTH CENTRAL IDAHO – As temperatures drop into the 50's over the next few weeks, residents are expected to spend more time indoors and surrounded by other people. South Central Public Health District (SCPHD) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) urge residents to get their flu shot now before they are exposed to the virus.

“Protection from the flu doesn't start as soon as you get the vaccine. It can take two weeks for the antibodies to develop,” says Cheryle Becker, Public Health Division Administrator. “If you wait until a family member or neighbor has the flu it's likely you'll still catch the disease.”

Vaccination is especially important for people at high risk for serious flu complications including children under the age of two, pregnant women, people with chronic health conditions, and the elderly. Residents over the age of 65 are encouraged to get the high dose version of the flu vaccine.

“The high dose vaccine has been delayed this year for many providers,” Becker said. “If you are over 65 years old it's worth it to check with your doctor before getting a standard adult dose. They may want you to wait until the high dose comes in so you are better protected.”

Some vaccine providers do not offer the high dose vaccine, or haven't received their higher dose vaccine yet. Becker encourages residents to ask their provider and make sure they are getting the correct vaccine for their age.

The flu is contagious before symptoms start, so practicing good hygiene at all times can help prevent its spread. SCPHD recommends people:

- Get a flu vaccination.

- Wash hands often and particularly after sneezing and coughing.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes or cough into your sleeve.
- Stay home when sick.

The CDC reports the 2018-2019 flu season was the longest in the past 10 years, lasting a full 21 weeks. The season peaked mid-February but the first patients were confirmed in October, 2018.

Visit phd5.idaho.gov for clinic schedules and contact information.

To see the latest outbreak map in Idaho:

http://gethealthy.dhw.idaho.gov/index.php/home/get_dashboard/23

The flu season, explained: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/season/flu-season.htm>